

Christine Joyce

6/9/08 (21)

From: Shawn O'Malley
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2008 8:34 PM
To: Steve Ledoux; Manager Department
Cc: Tom Tidman; 'Leslie Gerhardt'; Brewster Conant; Bill Klauer
Subject: RE: Isaac Schwartzman, request for Cemetery Commission assistance

Thank you Steve. I will inform Mr. Schwartzman first thing tomorrow.

Shawn

-----Original Message-----

From: Steve Ledoux
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2008 1:37 PM
To: Shawn O'Malley; Manager Department
Cc: Tom Tidman; 'Leslie Gerhardt'; Brewster Conant; Bill Klauer
Subject: RE: Isaac Schwartzman, request for Cemetery Commission assistance

I have spoken to the Chair of the Board of selectmen and I will grant the Schwartzman request for the burial fee of \$500.

Steven L. Ledoux
Town Manager
472 Main St
Acton, MA 01720
Telephone: (978) 264-9612
Fax: (978) 264-9630

When writing or corresponding, please be aware that the Secretary of State has determined that most email is a public record and, therefore, may not be kept confidential.

-----Original Message-----

From: Shawn O'Malley
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2008 1:20 PM
To: Manager Department
Cc: Tom Tidman; Leslie Gerhardt; Brewster Conant; Bill Klauer
Subject: FW: Isaac Schwartzman, request for Cemetery Commission assistance

I spoke with Mr. Schwartzman the other day and he informed me that his father is very ill and may pass away very soon. I am assuming that the Schwartzman's will want to follow with Jewish tradition and commit the body to the earth within 48 hours of his father's passing. The cemetery does not presently have a policy regarding recipients of Social Security burial benefits. I have added this matter to the agenda for the next Cem Com meeting so that we might draft such a policy and forward it to the BOS for their consideration.

In the event that Mr. Schwartzman's father passes away before such a policy is considered/implemented is it possible for the Manager's Department to grant Mr. Schwartzman's request that the burial fee be reduced to \$500?

Thank you,

Shawn O'Malley
Acton Natural Resources Department
(978) 264-9644
somalley@acton-ma.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Schwartzman [mailto:michael_schwartzman@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2008 12:44 PM

Christine Joyce

From: Lauren Rosenzweig
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2008 2:59 PM
To: Manager Department
Subject: FW: Isaac Schwartzman, request for Cemetery Commission assistance



Acton May 23
2008.doc (43 KB)

Hi Steve,

This seems like a reasonable request. How do we make it happen?

Lauren

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Schwartzman [mailto:michael_schwartzman@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2008 12:44 PM
To: manager@acton-ma.gov; bos@acton-ma.gov; cemetery@acton-ma.gov
Cc: clerk@acton-ma.gov
Subject: Isaac Schwartzman, request for Cemetery Commission assistance

Attached.

Respectfully,

Michael Schwartzman

No virus found in this incoming message.

Checked by AVG.

Version: 7.5.524 / Virus Database: 269.24.0/1462 - Release Date: 5/23/2008 7:20 AM

No virus found in this outgoing message.

Checked by AVG.

Version: 7.5.524 / Virus Database: 269.24.0/1462 - Release Date: 5/23/2008 7:20 AM

Christine Joyce

From: Michael Schwartzman [michael_schwartzman@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2008 10:06 AM
To: Shawn O'Malley
Cc: Eva Taylor; Manager Department
Subject: Schwartzman

Dear Shawn,

I truly appreciate your meticulous work on this matter and bringing it to the conclusion. I do miss Acton.

I also appreciate that you and Acton took notice of the hardship experienced by other families in similar situation and that you and the Cemetery Commission intend to provide similar benefits to those families. This would be a kind and compassionate thing to do and would fit the character of my father -- a kind man.

Thanks again,

Michael Schwartzman

Dear Eva,
Thanks for your advice and help. Michael.

Dear Mr. Ledoux,
Thank you very much for your expeditious decision on the matter and your understanding. Michael

Michael I. Schwartzman
29 Galloupes Point Road
Swampscott, Massachusetts 01907-2703
(781) 599-1142
FAX: (781) 599-0181
E-mail: M.Schwartzman@Yahoo.com

TO: Town of Acton

- Board of Selectmen
- Mr. Brewster Conant, Secretary of the Board of the Cemetery Commission
- Mr. Steve Ledoux, Town Manager

CC: Ms. Eva K Taylor, Town Clerk

By email

May 23, 2008

Gentlemen/Ladies,

I have discussed this matter briefly with Ms. Taylor, and at her suggestion of the addressees and her offer to shepherd this matter through its consideration, I have written this letter.

Background

I own three two-grave lots at Woodlawn Cemetery (#276 Sec. 8, #411 Sec. 14 and #352 Sec. 8) in one of which my mother is buried. My father, Isaac Schwartzman, is 94, is gravely ill and is currently in Faulkner Hospital. He wishes to be buried next to his wife. My father is veteran of WWII and is entitled to Social Security burial benefits.

I have lived in Acton for 26 years since 1974 until moving away a few years ago. My father and my mother lived in Acton for 11 years, until my mother passed away, and my father had to move to a specialized faculty for older people in Newton, MA.

The Social Security benefits my father is entitled to amount to the following: the Commonwealth will pay to the funeral home handling the burial \$1100, provided the total cost of the burial does not exceed \$1500 and the deceased or the relatives of the deceased pay the remainder, \$400. That is exactly how my mother's funeral was arranged several years ago.

Apparently, the Commonwealth did not change its financial arrangements with the Social Security recipients for several years, while the costs went up. Acton Cemetery Department now charges \$1000 fee for the grave opening services, roughly doubling the fee from the fee several years ago.

I have contacted three funeral homes, including the one that conducted my mother's funeral, and all three refused to perform the funeral at the Woodlawn Cemetery because the \$1000 grave opening fee does not allow the funeral home to make any profit. All

three refused to accept my payment to compensate the difference, amounting to \$500, between the customary grave opening fee for Social Security recipients and the Acton fee of \$1000. All three claimed this would violate the Commonwealth regulation related to reimbursements for funerals by the Commonwealth. The only choices they have made available to us were two:

1. To abandon the cemetery lot at Woodlawn, and bury my father, against his wishes and the wishes of his family, at another cemetery, one that charges around \$500 for grave opening services for Supplemental Social Security recipients.
2. Abandon the Social Security entitlement and pay the full funeral charge of \$7,500 to \$10,000.

Below, reproduced verbatim, is an email from one of the funeral homes:

"Dear Michael, You should be aware of the arrangement that the local Jewish funeral homes have with the cemetery caretakers in this area. When a Medicaid funded funeral takes place, the caretaker charges less than half the full grave opening charge (\$500.00) which allows the funeral home to participate. (There are no liners required in those cemeteries) Woodlawn Cemetery in Acton does not have any such arrangement. One can apply for financial assistance with the Town of Acton but the form asks "have you been domiciled in the Town of Acton for the last five years?" I wish you well. David "

Request to the Town of Acton

I most respectfully request the Town of Acton, on behalf of my father and on behalf of his family, to charge \$500 grave opening fee at the Woodlawn Cemetery and thus allow my father to be buried next to his wife and to allow him to use the Social Security benefits he is entitled to.

I do not wish the Town of Acton to suffer financially and do not wish the Town to take a loss on this transaction, and thus I am offering to:

- Pay the remaining \$500 to the Town's treasury, or
- Contribute \$500 to the Arboretum (Conservation Commission), or Council on Aging, or the Housing Authority, or the Cemetery Commission, or
- Any other arrangement similar to the above and found suitable by the Town of Acton.

I most sincerely hope that the Town were I lived for almost 30 years and were both of my sons went to schools and where my farther lived for may years, will allow us the above requested arrangement, one that entails no financial loss to the Town.

With warm regards,

Michael Schwartzman